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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 335. FOR WEEK ENDING JUNE 1, 1895. [PRICE ONE PENNY.

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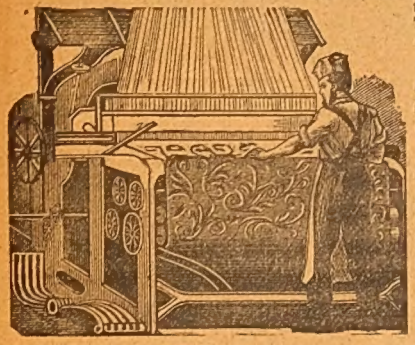

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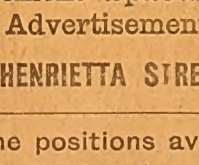

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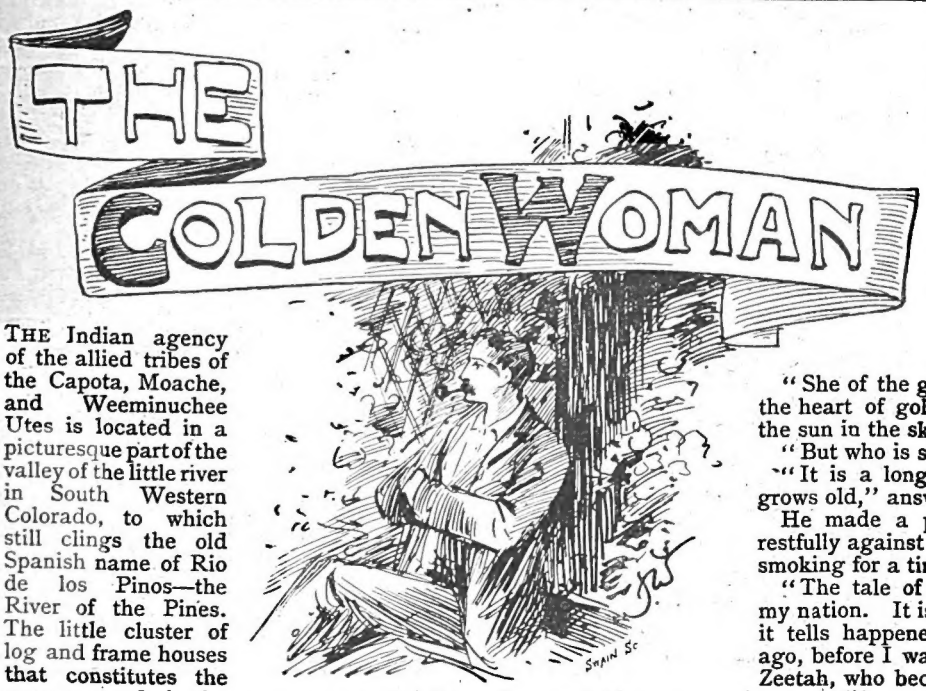
EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 335.] *FOR THE WEEK ENDING JUNE 1, 1895.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.



THE Indian agency of the allied tribes of the Capota, Moache, and Weeminuchee Utes is located in a picturesque part of the valley of the little river in South Western Colorado, to which still clings the old Spanish name of Rio de los Pinos—the River of the Pines. The little cluster of log and frame houses that constitutes the agency stands in the narrowest part of the valley, and high mesa walls rise from the river on either side. Far away in the distance on either side, their crests showing high above the mesa lines, can be seen the La Plata Mountains and the mountains that hem in grim old Cumbres Pass.

For a month the old log agency building was my home. During the day I lived among the Indians, listening to their strange tales of magic, of battles and hunts of the golden long ago, before the day of reservations and Indian agents, and at night—the month was March—we clustered about the big open wood fire in the doctor's quarters, and talked of the hundred thousand things that isolated men with time to spare can find to talk of.

One midnight found me sitting in the agency porch smoking and wondering at the beauty of the brilliant moonlight that filled the valley. About two hundred yards from the building was a cluster of *can-nees* or tents, one of them brilliantly lighted by means of a bright wood fire, and sharp at midnight there went up from this tent a chorus of as weird unearthly wails as I believe a white man has ever listened to. I knew it to be some of the "medicine making" of the Indians, and I thought lazily of going to the place to ascertain if any of the Indians, who were my friends, were there, and if I might witness the ceremony.

I sat so for half an hour, listening to the wail that came from the medicine tent, and, just because I had nothing better to do, I was going to turn in, when, without a sound, old Lo-To-Kah stood before me. He was dressed in full native costume; an eagle feather was in his hair, and he was wrapped in a rich Navajo blanket. He was not known to be on the reservation, and I had not expected to see him.

"Lo-To-Kah," I said in surprise, "where do you come from? Why are you here?"

"I am here, O friend, for two things. One is to see you, for Jose Amarille met me in the Blue Mountains and told me. And the other thing I am here for is to be present at the chant of the Golden Woman. Do you not hear the chant the medicine men are making?"

"I hear the chant," I answered, "but what is it all about? And who is the Golden Woman?"

The old man did not seem to hear me, and he gazed away down the valley as though he saw something. As though speaking to himself he said:

"She of the golden hair. The Golden Woman with the heart of gold! Ah! she was more beautiful than the sun in the sky on a May morning!"

"But who is she, or was she?" I asked.

"It is a long story, O friend of mine, and the night grows old," answered Lo-To-Kah.

He made a pillow of his blanket, and I leant restfully against the log wall of the building. After smoking for a time in silence he said:

"The tale of the Golden Woman is an old tale of my nation. It is a true tale, and the things of which it tells happened in the old time of the long, long ago, before I was fully a man, before I had ever seen Zeetah, who became my wife. Eighteen summers had come into my life, and that was all, and I was but a boy when the Golden Woman was brought captive to one of the encampments of my people. She was tied to a horse, riding astride like a man, and she was so weary that she swooned from faintness and fatigue as soon as she was lifted from the saddle.

"I have but to close my eyes, and in memory I can see that beautiful woman again. I can see her fair face, her eyes as blue as the arch of the sky, and her long silken hair that was of the glorious colour of molten gold. There was a time, too—just a fleeting bit of time scarcely long enough to be remembered—when I gazed upon her and was almost sorry my skin was red instead of white; for I thought if I had been white, and had been of the blood of her race, I might have won her love. Such thoughts were foolish thoughts, *amigo*, just stray, half-formed thoughts that wandered unasked into the empty head of a boy. And, too, that was before Zeetah had ever been seen by me."

The old man ceased speaking. He leant his head against the wall of the old agency building, a dreamy look came into his eyes, and he gazed down the valley. His cigar went out; I lit a match and offered it to him, but he did not see it.

A belated Indian swain, returning to his tent from some amorous expedition, passed us and spoke, but Lo-To-Kah did not stir. His mind was wandering back to that old time, almost three-quarters of a century gone, when he had been a youth and had known her who was called the Golden Woman. It seemed strange to me that Lo-To-Kah, the savage nobleman who had been a very knight in his loyal devotion to the one woman who had been his wife, should lose himself in a flood of memories of a woman whom I began to believe, he had loved in secret. He had had but one wife; and if a lurking love slept in his heart through all the long years that lay

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between his youth and his old age, it was a secret that he would not confess, and would not even give a hint of unless in some unguarded moment. After a time he roused himself and said:

"Pardon me, my friend; I was dreaming without being asleep. We old men, when we live past the time that is allotted for action, live over the years again in memory, and I was living over again a time that was old before you were born. I will now go on with my tale.

"When I was a boy, and esteemed by some of the vain-glorious warriors as being too young for battle, a party of our warriors set out on a raid against a roving band of Kiowas that were journeying beyond Tierra Amarillo. I desired to go with the band, and could have gone, except that Mirdo, who was sub-chief and had command of the expedition, said that I should not. This Mirdo had longed to possess my mother when she was a girl, and because she would not wed him, he hated her and my father and myself. Mirdo who was on his horse, stood up in his stirrups, pointed his goad at me and said:

"'I go forth to lead men, and not children, to battle. Yon Lo-To-Kah is called a Ute, because he was born to a Ute woman, but he acts like no Ute. He is now old enough to be a man, to have lovers, to cheat slow old men out of the kisses of their young wives, and to play in the games of kan-yute where men win horses and blankets. He is not a man in love or games, and he will not be a man in war. He cannot go with any band I lead.'

"I stood in silence, my arms crossed upon my heart, and listened to the talk of Mirdo. And as he talked I promised to myself that a time would be when I would hold the throat of Mirdo in my grasp and make him eat his words and beg for his life like a craven. But I spoke no word in answer, for an Indian, as you know, can bide his time when he promises himself to be revenged upon his enemies. And Mirdo and his band rode away, their feathers streaming in the morning sunlight, and I was left in the camp with the women, the children, and the old men.

"It was evening when our warriors returned,—an evening two weeks after they had gone forth, an hour before the going down of the sun, when from far over that mesa that lies towards the cruel heights of Cumbres, we heard a cry of 'ho-la-ho-ho!' The cry was a cry of victory. Soon the men came in sight, riding one ahead of another. Both men and horses showed the signs of long travel and hard riding.

"Mirdo rode at the head, two fresh Kiowa scalps flying from the shoulder of his hunting shirt; and by his side, strapped to her horse and riding astride like a man, was the fairest and most beautiful woman who ever trod the earth of the valley of the River of the Pines.

"I liked not Mirdo and I expected to hear him insult me, but I stood among the tents to greet the warriors. Mirdo rode up with a flourish, dismounted, and called some old women to come and unbind the woman. And when she was unbound she swooned but she soon recovered, for she was a woman who was brave.

"'Who is the woman with the golden hair?' asked an old man.

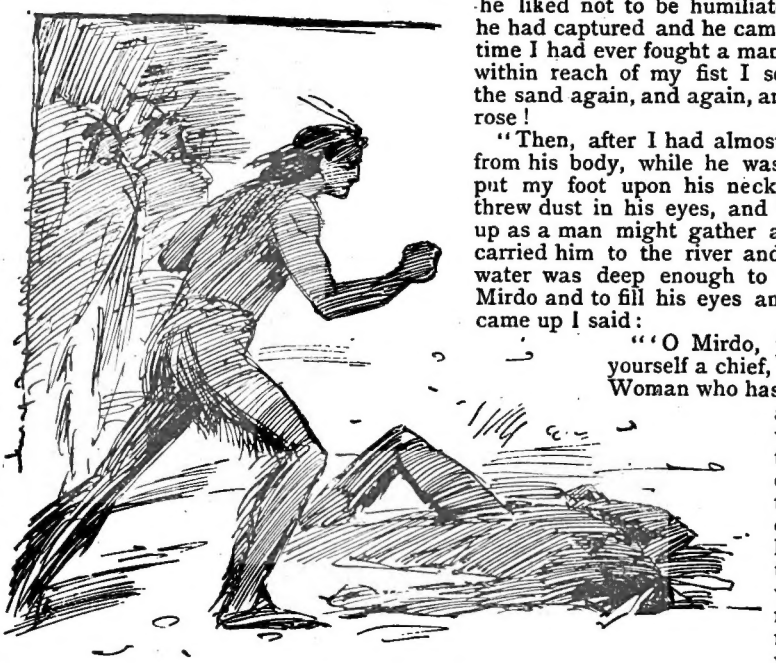
"'She is my captive,' replied Mirdo; 'the Kiowas took her from Navajos, and I took her from the Kiowas. She is mine to keep my tent; she is mine to work for me. I am Mirdo, and I am a man without fear, and a man who deserves the most beautiful woman in the land.'

"So boasted Mirdo; and as he boasted he looked upon the woman with his greedy gaze, and as he looked she cowered and shrank back. And I spoke to the woman, asking her name and from whence she came. The woman could not understand the Ute speech, but she seemed to feel that I was her friend, and she came close to me and held out her hands to me in appeal.

"I could speak the Navajo tongue also, and Mirdo could not; and I spoke to the woman in that speech, and she answered and asked me to protect her. I gave answer that I would protect her with my life. And then Mirdo took me roughly by the shoulder, saying:

"'Speak not to my woman, you squaw. What! Do you think to play with her and prattle to her? Get you to your mother's tent.'"

"Mirdo stood leering into my face, and as soon as he finished, I shot my clenched fist into his face and felled him as the blow of a stone axe would fell a sheep. He rose to his feet and drew his knife. The men caught him and took it away, and said that Utes must fight not like enemies but with their naked hands. Mirdo was a coward at heart; but he liked not to be humiliated before the woman he had captured and he came on. It was the first time I had ever fought a man. When Mirdo came within reach of my fist I sent him sprawling in the sand again, and again, and again, as fast as he rose!



"I sent him sprawling in the sand.

"Then, after I had almost knocked the breath from his body, while he was lying in the dirt, I put my foot upon his neck, I spat upon him, I threw dust in his eyes, and then I gathered him up as a man might gather a log of wood, and I carried him to the river and threw him in. The water was deep enough to wet the garments of Mirdo and to fill his eyes and mouth. When he came up I said:

"'O Mirdo, you coyote, who call yourself a chief, look upon the Golden Woman who has four times been made a captive! First this woman was taken by the Navajos, and because they took her they had the right to do with her as they liked. Then she was taken by the Kiowas, who had the same right for the same reason. Then she was taken by you, and the rights of the other thieves became your rights. But now she is taken by me, mine is the right to do with her as I choose, and it will fare ill with any man who dares to so much as lay his finger upon her.'

"Mirdo stood glaring at me, his bleeding lips hanging, and a look of murder in his eyes. I had not intended to strike him again, but the sight of his big brute face was a temptation that was too strong: and just as he was ready to snarl some reply to the speech I had made, I struck him, breaking his nose.

"Then Mirdo slunk away. He vowed that he would leave the tribe and lay in wait for me in the forest. But an old medicine man, the one who was teacher of Mape-ah-sas, whom you know, said to Mirdo that he was a coward, and that if he ever sought to do me wrong except in a fair fight or open battle, he would cause the evil spirit to haunt him all the days of his life. You know, *amigo*, that no Ute would incur the danger of a medicine man's curse; and I knew that I was safe.

"Then the old man said the woman was mine, and that I had fairly won her. I took her to my mother's tent, but with no thought of making her my slave or my wife as Mirdo would have done. I told her that she was safe from all danger, and

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then I sat down on the ground before the tent and thought. I tried to think of Mirdo and the battle I had fought with him; but I could not think of him, because I was thinking of the Golden Woman who had come into my life so strangely. And there I sat all the night keeping guard over the tent and wondering what the days of the future would bring forth.

"From that time on, life was different to me. Before then I had been a lonely, silent boy, wandering in the forests or sitting aside, while the men and boys played games. But it was not long before the Golden Woman became my friend and then my companion; and we talked to each other and wandered together in the forests, and rode ponies from one encampment of my people to another. Not at first, of course; for the woman was timid and half afraid.

"She was afraid of my people, and also afraid of me, for she knew I could make her my slave or my wife if I cared to do so. But she besought me not to take her to wife, and I placed my hand in hers and told her I would guard her, and that her life should be lived as she desired. It was after that—after she had thanked me, and kissed my hand—that she became my companion.

"A few times the woman was affronted. One burly man of my tribe, when drunk upon Mexican mescal, attempted to embrace her. I was sitting in front of our tent at the time, fitting heads to arrows; but her first cry took me to her side, and when I had been there but a little time, the brute lay upon the ground in a stupor that came very near being death. I was mad with anger, and after I had felled the man to the ground and knocked him senseless, I sprang upon his body and trampled his face in the dirt.

"Then I took the Golden Woman in my arms as a mother might take a babe, and bore her to my tent. When we were inside the tent, she placed one of her soft arms about my neck, she drew my face down to hers and kissed me, crying as she did so. Her kiss thrilled me through and through, and I was in danger of forgetting my promise. And I told her if she desired me to keep the promises I had given, she must kiss me no more. It seemed for a moment as though she, too, were tired of the promise, for she held my hand in hers, and looked wistfully into my eyes.

"After the fear of my people left her, it came about that she would go among them. At first she went only to the women and children, but it was not long until she went among all, even the chiefs and medicine men.

"When a child was born in some cold tent on a hillside, the Golden Woman was there. When a woman or child was sick, there was the Woman; and when a plague came upon our people, when the men died in their tracks as they stood in the camp ground, and little children were daily found dead in the arms of their dead mothers, then it was that the people of the Ute nation learnt to love the glorious being whom we named the Golden Woman.

"She comforted the sorrowing, cared for the sick, and prepared the dead for burial. She seemed sleepless and tireless, and every hour of the day and night while the plague lasted, she would be seen flitting from one tent to another, making tasteful things for the sick ones to eat, bathing the hot brows of those who were in the throes of death. And our people believed she was a medicine woman sent from a bright land that lies in the sun.

"Then some men came from the other Ute tribes, and they took home to their people the tale of this Golden Woman whose heart was said to be of pure gold. And thus it came to be that this woman was looked upon by us almost as a goddess, and that feasts and chanting are yet given in her honour.

"There are not many secrets among Indians who live in one encampment, and the people knew that the Woman was not my wife. I had another tent made, joining the one my mother had before, and I lived in the outer one.

"In time I taught her the Ute speech, and in time she told me something of her life. She was born in a great city in the East, and had gone to the West to be a missionary among the Indians. She first lived with a band of peaceful Navajos, and learnt their speech. Then she went to El Paso del Norte for rest.

"I took the Golden Woman in my arms."

"Between El Paso del Norte and Ciudad Fé, she had been captured by a roving band of Navajos, but before they had reached their camp they were beaten in battle with Kiowas and the Kiowas had taken her. The Kiowas started for their own country and were surrounded by the Utes under Mirdo. In this way she had been stolen by one tribe after another, and so swiftly that no harm had befallen her.

"More than this the woman did not tell me, thinking, because I was an Indian, I would not understand. But I learnt in time that she had journeyed to the wild lands of the West because of an almost hopeless hope that she might find her lover, who had come to the West and had never been heard of again.

"But as time went on, the Golden Woman grew silent as she went about her work of healing the sick. I fancied that she tired of dwelling in my tent, and when I asked her she said it would please her if she might dwell alone. It is not well for a woman to dwell alone, especially if the woman be young and beautiful, and I would not give my consent; but an old Navajo woman, who had been taken captive, and who had grown too old for work, also desired to live apart from the others.

"And the two women, the fair young one and the wrinkled old one, had a hut built in a sheltered part of the valley of the Rio Florida, and there they took up their abode. They tilled some land, and the hunters brought them much game, and they did not want for anything. The other people did not at first note the change that was taking place in the Golden Woman; but I, who knew her as well as though she were my mother, or daughter, knew that she was going mad.

"After this, the years sped on, and I lived my life as it came to me. I met Zeetah and took her to be my wife. I became a chief among my people, and much honour came to me. My mother died, my brother was killed by the Apaches, and many adventures of many kinds befell me. Often I journeyed to the ends of the lands that were known to my people, and often the time was long between my visits to these valleys.

"One time I took my band of people and went into the West, and for almost two years we did not see the Valley of the Pines. After a time we began, very slowly, to make our way homeward again, but going only by short marches, hunting and fishing by the way.

"While we were encamped in a valley in the Blue Mountains a man came to our camp, being on his way from this valley to visit one of our tribes in the place that is now Utah. And when he visited us he told me that the Golden Woman was sick in her hut, and that the old Navajo woman was also sick and had lost her mind. Then I told Zeetah what I intended doing, and I saddled my fleetest horse and set out for this place, hoping to see the woman again before she died, or perchance to save her life.

"When I came to the place I dismounted and went within. Upon a shelf-like bed built into the wall lay the old Navajo woman dead. And seated on the floor, in the middle of the room, her wealth of golden hair falling all about her, sat the Golden Woman, moaning and rocking herself to and fro. I

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stood in the door and gazed upon her, and it was long before she heeded me. In time, though, she saw me, and smiled a sad, sad smile that almost broke my heart. And she said:

"'So you have returned to me, Lo-To-Kah. Did you find Hugh?'

"I had never heard of any man named Hugh, and I knew not what answer to make. I stood in silence, trying to think, and the woman got up from her seat on the floor. She came and stood by my side, and took my hand in hers.

"'Lo-To-Kah, I have been crazed. For how long I do not know, but I know that when last a glimmer of reason and memory was left to me, the Navajo woman was living and was well; and now, you see, she lies dead. It must be that I am very ill, and it may be that I, too, will soon lie dead in this little hut. Now, when I am dead, I desire that you go forth and journey among the white-faced people until you find a man named Hugh; and when you find him, tell him that Helen died with his name on her lips, and that the love of him was the only love that ever was in her heart.'

"She sank down on the floor again, and before I could think of an answer to make, I heard a shout from outside, and, upon looking, I saw a small party of Navajo warriors riding forward. I did not fear the Navajos, for our tribes were then at peace. And when they came nearer I saw that a white man was with them.

"I was glad of this, for I knew not how to set about the task of finding this Hugh, and thought perhaps the white man could tell me. I told the Golden Woman to look; but at first she paid no heed, and she would pay no heed until the party of riders had drawn up their horses and stopped before the door. Then the woman rose to her feet, she brushed her long hair out of her eyes, and with me she went out.

"As she stepped outside the door, I saw the white man leap from his horse with a great shout. The woman saw him the same instant, and stopped dead as though she had been stricken with a palsy. The two white-faced people stood in mute, wondering silence for an instant, then the man called out the name 'Helen'; he sprang forward and clasped the woman in his arms, and all the time he wept as a mother might weep who had found her long-lost child.

"I thought at first the man might be her father, for he seemed older than she; but he was not her father, he was her lover. The woman nestled in his arms, and then for the first time for long years I saw the light of perfect reason shining in her eyes; for the first time since I knew her I saw her with a happy look.

"And then he saw me, and at once he stood as straight and firm as though he were made of stone.

"'Is this woman your wife?' he asked in a fierce tone.

"'Is she your wife?' I asked in turn.

"The man flushed hot and red; for a moment he did not speak, and then he hung his head and said:

"Stood in mute, wondering silence."

"'No, God forgive me, she is not. You have as much right to her as I.'

"'Why, Hugh, what is all this talk of right?' asked the woman, looking curiously into his face.

"The face of the man hung lower and lower; his cheeks grew first red and then white, and he said:

"'It means, dear one, that I gave you up as dead, and married another woman.'

"And then the Golden Woman lay on the ground at his feet, in a faint that seemed like death. And the man took her face in his hands, and kissed her lips, and wept over her as one weeps over the dead. It was a sad thing to see, friend; sadder than I at that time could understand. For then I knew only the ways of the Indians, and it seemed to me that if the woman loved the man, and the man loved her better than the other woman, who was his wife, that he could cast off his wife and take the Golden Woman in her stead.

"In time the woman recovered, and it seemed to me that the shifting light of lunacy was again beginning to come into her eyes. And I, knowing no better, stood by their sides as they talked, and I learnt that the man who was named Hugh had been the lover of the woman, Helen, and was to have taken her for his wife. He was an officer of the white-skinned soldiers, and had gone into the West, and the report had gone back to his home that he was dead.

"Then it was that the first touch of lunacy fell upon the woman; but she did not believe him dead. And saying she was going as a missionary among the Indians, she went to the East to seek him. She was captured, as I have told you. And the man who had not been killed, in time returned to his home in the East, and found that the woman had gone; and he believed her dead, and he had married another woman.

"He told the blue-eyed Helen that the woman who was his wife was cold, and proud, and haughty, and that he did not love her and she did not love him.

"'But she is your wife,' said Helen.

"'Yes, God pity me, she is my wife,' answered the man, his eyes upon the ground.

"What more they said I do not know, for I went with the men to help bury the old Navajo woman; and while we were thus at work the white man and woman talked, and the Navajos talked to me. They told me that the white man was a man who had first come to their country to fight them, but that he had become their friend, and that, more than a year before, he had come among them to live, telling them only that he was not happy in his own home. And I knew that he had left his wife, and would never call her wife again, whether Helen married him or not.

"When we had buried the old woman and returned to the tent, the man and the woman were still talking, both speaking in the Navajo tongue, which had come, from long usage, to be the same to them as the tongue of their own people. And I, knowing the thing that was troubling them, asked if a runner might not be sent to the white man's home to learn if his wife still lived, in order that he might take the Golden Woman to wife. The man said that could not be done. Then he mused a while and said to me:

"'Do you know the trails that lead to Santa Fé?'

"'I do,' I replied.

"The man took a paper book from his pocket, tore out a leaf, wrote upon it, and asked me how much gold I would require of him to carry that to Santa Fé. I replied that I would not do it for gold, but would do it for the Golden Woman. And he told me the paper was for a man who lived in Santa Fé, and was to ask him to write to the East and learn if the woman who was his wife still lived.

"I was told to give it to the man, and then, in six weeks' time, the man said he would send to Santa Fé again and get a letter that would let him know what he sought to know. And I took the leaf of paper and said I would go, and that I would also tarry in Santa Fé, if he desired, until the answer came out of the East.

"As the time drew near for the courier to return, both the man and the woman became troubled, and often they would anxiously gaze away over the mesas

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"There sat a man and woman."

as though hoping, yet fearing, for the return of the runner, and for the news he would bring. I sent a runner to my camp to tell Zeetah why I should be away; and although I greatly respected the two white people, I thought they were fools.

"For if they had been wise, they would have lived and loved and forgotten the East, and paid no heed to the going and coming of runners. And when the time for the return of the runner came, I, too, began to grow restless, and I would go down the valley, many miles below where the *rancho* of Sevaro now is, to try to meet him. And it chanced that I met the runner fully two hours' ride away from the camp.

"'Ho, Navajo, what news?' I asked as soon as the man came near.

"'The wife of the white man lives,' replied the Navajo.

"The reply so angered me that I almost struck the man, for I knew how it would grieve the Golden Woman and the man she loved. You know, friend, that only Indians with evil hearts will lie. But at that time I resolved to lie, or to induce the Navajo to lie, which was as bad. And I said to the Navajo, whom I knew well:

"'Do you know the cayuse pony that is in my herd? The one with the glossy hair, that can run like a deer and leap like an antelope?'

"'I know that pony,' said the man. 'If it were mine, many are the blankets I would win with it in races.'

"'It is yours,' I replied, 'if you will forget this foolish message that was told to you by the white man in Santa Fé, and will tell the white man and woman that the wife in the East is dead.'

"'But the writing that I carry will tell the truth,' said the Navajo, his eyes shining at the thought of my cayuse.

"'Tear up the writing, and say you lost it,' said I. A strange thing was that I did not feel like a mean man, even when I advised such things.

"And the Navajo tore up the writing, and then galloped to the camp with his lying message. And when I returned I saw two happier people than I had ever seen before."

Lo-To-Kah pulled a gold hunting-case watch from some fold or pocket in his garments, looked at it leisurely, and asked me for a match.

"But the Golden Woman?" I asked. "What became of her?"

"She is dead," answered the old man, lapsing into the stolidity of his race.

"But what befell her before she died? Come, tell me the remainder of her story."

"The man and the woman talked long about returning to their own land, and to their own people," said Lo-To-Kah; "but the wilderness, forests, and the wild life, have many charms for those who have had sore hearts, and they like not to return to the clanging cities and the unwise ways of their kind. And Hugh, the white soldier, and Helen, the Golden Woman, agreed with each other that they would abide in the wild lands of the West.

"They went away that night, telling me not to say that I knew aught of their going; and I did not learn more of them for many years. My people believed that Helen had been an enchanted woman, and that she had vanished in the air and gone to her home in the sun. I said nothing to change their belief; and they began the chant of the Golden Woman, and the custom has lasted through all the years since then.

"After that time I knew no more of the Golden Woman for ten long years. Then I was riding alone, going to a great medicine ceremony on the river Gila, to which all men must go alone. And while I was riding across the desert I came to a fertile little valley, hidden away among cliffs, from which I saw smoke arising. I thought it must be the encampment of some wandering Indians, and I approached it with caution.

"And when I rode nearer to the place, I saw in the valley a house built of stone, and it was surrounded by fields of corn, and melons, and trees. And I rode to the house, and upon a porch that was covered with the boughs of trees there sat a man and a woman. The man was Hugh, the woman was Helen, the Golden Woman.

"They were glad to see me, and I was treated like a chief returning from a long absence. But I was grieved to note that the woman was again partially insane. She knew me, she knew her husband as well as ever; but she had forgotten many things that took place in the East.

"And the man told me that they had built that *rancho* and lived there alone, but that once a year they went to Santa Fé, or some other Mexican town for supplies. And he said he was happier, living alone with his wife in the wilderness, than he would have been if he had been a king and had not had her with him. And I believe I understood, in a dim way, how this might be a true thing that he said."

THE OUTLAWS OF THE AIR.

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THE BOON OF SILENCE

AND so Peter Martin reluctantly came to the conclusion that he would have to consult a physician. He had never been to a physician in his long life, and to have to go now was bitter to him. It was a luxury. He felt he couldn't afford it. A man who keeps a four pounds a week family on two pounds a week paid monthly has a hard time of it in this world.

For thirty years the roar of the City had been in his ears, and he had no holidays. So it was just his luck to stumble into the office of the most expensive doctor in the metropolis. If the servant had seen him he would not have got into the presence of the great doctor, but Martin, knowing nothing of how a man whose time is worth two guineas a minute is hedged in, and happening to come when the last patient was undergoing examination, walked straight in from the street, and by good luck, to the infinite astonishment of doctor and patient, walked into the consulting room.

"There is something wrong with me," said he, fumbling with his hat. "I don't know just what it is, so I thought I should see a doctor. Which of you is it?"

The patient waved his hand towards the great specialist, and Martin turned his pathetic, appealing glance in his direction.

"See what's wrong with him," said the patient in a whisper, who was evidently impressed with the humour of the situation.

He thought it funny that so evidently poor a man should consult a physician whose fees ran into hundreds.

The doctor asked many questions and examined his new patient carefully. Then he stood away and looked at him for a moment.

"There is nothing radically wrong with you. What you need is absolute quiet. Medicine will not do you any good. Get out of the roar of the City for a couple of weeks, or a month, if possible. Go into the country, to some farmhouse. That's all you need."

Peter Martin sat down with a sigh of exhaustion.

"I cannot get away," he said, "I would lose my place, and besides, I can't afford it. I get only two pounds a week."

"Ah, I am sorry for you," said the doctor. "We have no prescription for poverty."

The wealthy patient put his hand in his pocket and drew out some money.

"Here," he said, "that will help you to a little holiday."

Peter shook his head. He was too nervous and shaky to draw himself up indignantly, as perhaps he should have done.

"I have never taken any money that I did not earn," he said, "and I am too old to begin. How much is your fee?" he asked, looking at the specialist.

"I usually get one and sixpence," answered the great man, "that is, of course, when I don't give any medicine."

"Of course," said Peter, simply, drawing out his lean purse and paying over the coin. "Good morning, gentlemen." And with that Martin tremulously departed.

"You did that nicely," said the patient rising. "I must follow him and try to smooth over my blunder."

"Are you going to experiment with him?"

"Perhaps."

Martin, as he walked slowly down the street, felt a touch on his shoulder. He turned, and saw the man who had been with the doctor.

"If you come with me I think I can help you. Will you step into my carriage?"

Somewhat reluctantly Peter did so. He did not like the man, but there was something in his dark glance that compelled obedience. When the carriage stopped Martin was taken into a house that was luxuriously furnished.

"Sit down," said the stranger. "Now let me understand thoroughly about your occupation."

Martin told him all about it, and the stranger listened patiently.

"If I understand you, then, your hearing is of no use to you in your business—that is, it depends on your sight only. If you were deaf you could still hold your place. Am I right?"

"Quite right," answered Peter.

"Well, then, I want to try an experiment on you. I think it will help you; in any case, it will do you no harm. Do you consent?"

"If it will help me."

"I think it will. Now fix your eyes and attention on this."

The machine referred to was a small box with a thin, upright rod on which were two horizontal arms each with a small, round, shining mirror at the end. The dark man touched a spring and the mirrors rapidly revolved. Peter looked at the whirling mirrors intently for a moment, then leant slightly forward with his eyes widely opened.

The stranger, watching him keenly for a few moments, at last stopped the machine. Peter's eyes remained gazing fixedly at nothing.

"You are asleep," said the man, quietly, passing his hand over Peter's face.

The eyelids closed and Peter answered not.

"When you awake you will be stone deaf—you will hear absolutely nothing. You will have to be very careful of the street crossings, and wherever there is any danger. Now wake up."

A shiver ran over Martin's body and he looked round wildly for a moment.

"What have you been doing to me?" he inquired.

"Can you hear me speak?" said the man loudly.

"What have you done to me?" repeated Peter. "Everything seems unnaturally quiet."

The dark man drew a writing pad towards him, and wrote on it handing the result to Peter. He read the words:—

"You are stone deaf. Try the effect for two weeks and then come back and see me. If at any time before you wish your hearing restored, come to this address. Try the effect for two weeks if you can stand it."

Here followed the man's name and address. Peter folded the paper in a dazed sort of way and put it in his pocket. He went out into the street. The traffic was as busy as ever, but an awful silence was over the City. There was something unearthly in the appearance of bustle and the absence of all sound. He was in a city of phantoms, and it frightened him at first, but finally there seemed to come over him a sweet peace, because noise did not exist.

When he went home that night his good wife received him just as she had done these many years.

"Now, you good-for-nothing, what's kept you? Here am I toiling and moiling, and getting something to eat for an old fool that doesn't know enough to come home for it before it's cold. What are you looking at me like that for? What's the matter with you? Have you been drinking again?"

Now Peter neither drank nor smoked, which no one knew better than Mrs. Sally Martin. He couldn't afford either; but

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as he always winced when she accused him of it she accordingly flung it at him.

"Sally," he said, quietly. "I'm deaf. I suppose you are speaking to me, but I cannot hear a word. You'll have to write it down."

"Write it down!" exclaimed the good woman, aghast.

She had some idea that he was shamming; but as she watched him she saw that he was serious. She broke out occasionally in wrath, but quickly subsided and murmured, "Oh, Lor'!"

And Peter Martin spent the first evening of peace at his own fireside for twenty years.

In two weeks Peter Martin called on the dark man in the fine house. He was looking very much better in health than he had done when he left that place a fortnight before. The far-away look of the deaf was already beginning to appear in his eyes. A sweet serenity sat upon his countenance.

"I am pleased to see you look so——"

Then the man remembered and drew his writing pad towards him and wrote:

'If you will sit down in the chair I will take away your deafness."

Peter read it with a smile.

"I merely came to thank you," he said. "I will not sit down."

A Tender Conscience

HE went among his friends by the name of the "Vatican Torso." Gordon Durmot rather liked him. In spite of the ponderousness of his sobriquet, and the magnificent solidity of build which had earned it, he had found the young man less heavy than he had supposed. The classic suggestiveness of his head and face did not prevent him from being an apparently simple young Roman of the nineteenth century, with a fine, lambent, open eye, and something ingenuous and almost appealing in all his mien.

It has been said that Gordon Durmot was inclined rather to like him. But this was before the moment when, like a flash of lightning, it came home to him that the Marchese Severini was his rival. Then all this changed. After all, Florence was only a girl, and girls were easily flattered by the devotion of youthful noblemen with profiles like Greek gods.

Gordon Durmot wished that he had never followed her at all; wished he had never come abroad. He hung upon the outskirts of excursionists as they scattered among the ruins, and looked over the Campagna and extolled the view. For Gordon there were only two objects in creation just then—Florence's light, slim figure, in its perfect costume, and the Marchese Severini's stalwart form by her side.

He was not usually so impressionable, but it seemed to Gordon at that moment that life could hold no further joys. He resolved to leave Rome on the morrow—perhaps to return home altogether.

After coming to this decision he seemed to gain some composure.

He no longer followed those two figures with his eyes. He turned, in a spirit of bitter defiance, to a pale, fair-haired girl who had sat by his side at luncheon, and, though he scarcely remembered her name, devoted himself vigorously to her for the remainder of the afternoon.

Meanwhile this was what had been transpiring between Florence and the magnificent young Roman.

"Mees—ah, you seema so cold. It is deefeecult—I don't know how you say—to speak to you."

"I do not know why it should be difficult to speak to me, Marchese," nervously.

"It is deefeecult for one who—who lofes you, mademoiselle."

That which she had dreaded had come at last, and Florence shrank back.

"Oh, please, please—don't!" she hastily murmured, with an averting gesture.

"You will not listen to me? You see I was right." The handsome young Roman's face betokened deep despair. He turned very white and his eyes had a hunted look. Florence's heart bled within her.

"It is very hard for me to speak to you so," she cried in trembling accents, "but I cannot do otherwise. I am sorry you have fixed any thought on me—you—I can only hope you will soon forget me!" she concluded, clasping her hands in her earnestness.

Severini shook his head mournfully.

"We are not like zat. We have stronger passions—stronger emotions. We are not like ze Eenglish."

Suddenly he raised his downcast eyes and looked at her.

"You will not care for me, you will not have any of my lofe—because of your compatriot who came a little while ago—because of the gut Monsieur—M. Durmot?" and before she could reply he had exclaimed, "Ah, yes, I know."

"I—you are mistaken. Mr. Durmot is only a friend," stammered poor Florence.

But Severini was not to be deceived.

As they went back to the others he spoke but once, and that was to say—

"He will never lofe you as I would. It is impossible. Ze Englishmen are fery cold. I know—yes, I know that he must lofe you, but it will not be like me."

That evening the married lady under whose chaperonage Florence found herself, observed, with all possible discretion, that she thought the Marchese Severini was becoming very attentive.

"He—he proposed to me to-day," said Florence, who felt horribly miserable and conscience-stricken, and longed to confide in somebody.

"And you refused him?"

A nod for a reply.

"Well, he has a fine name, you know, and he is very, very handsome. And you might have had enough for two—for, of course, he is quite, quite poor. Still, I suppose you know your own affairs, dear. Has—has Mr. Durmot anything to do with your decision? There! that is very prying of me. Quite inexcusable. Forget that I ever asked you."

But the good lady had had as much answer as she needed in the violent blush on her protegée's cheek. She resolved to keep her eyes wider open when Durmot next came.

But several days went by, and Durmot—who had been so assiduous that it really looked as though he had come abroad simply to be with Florence—did not appear. Someone said he was about to leave Rome. Florence began to grow pale and thin. She was wasting away. Her chaperone, who was a thoroughly kindhearted person, finally resolved to broach the subject plainly, and there resulted an admission on Florence's part that she believed Durmot did care—a little—for her—perhaps, but that he had probably resolved never to come near her again

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because he might think she had determined to marry Severini's good looks and title.

"That must be put before him in the right light then," said the lady.

"Oh, for goodness sake! I should die of mortification if anything were said!" cried Florence.

"Now, my dear, that is folly. It is my firm belief that many a woman has made herself, and a good man, too, miserable for life just because of some such false pride, false delicacy. Let me manage this thing. I shall shield you if you insist on it. But since you have actually refused that magnificent specimen of humanity, the 'Torso,' Mr. Durmot may as well know it."

Florence was too wretched, possibly, to make further objections. In any case, she said nothing at the time, and her friend took the silence for moral acquiescence. In the course of the same afternoon she so arranged matters as to have had an interview with Gordon Durmot, which put a sudden end to the misery that gentleman had been enduring ever since the famous day of the picnic outside the walls, and she furthermore found it necessary to attend an archæological lecture that same evening, leaving Florence considerately at home in the hotel. Nor was she surprised when, upon her return, the girl threw herself into her arms with a glowing face and whispered tremulously that Mr. Durmot had been there.

Gordon Durmot told the chaperone all that she wished to know. The beautiful diamond engagement ring which came the next day apprised her of nothing new.

. . . . . .

They were to be married immediately upon their return to England in the autumn.

A month before the wedding they found themselves in Paris.

And here Florence received a letter which made her turn very white. She was alone when it came to her, and she said nothing of it for several days. During those days she passed many hours by herself, seemingly almost shunning the society of Durmot.

"Do you know what ails Florence?" the latter said anxiously to Florence's chaperone.

"No," replied the latter with some impatience. "Girls are very queer anyway, and Florence especially so. She is supersensitive. One can never tell how things are going to affect her. She may have something on her mind. I think she has."

The knowledge of what that "something" was came upon Durmot like a clap of thunder out of a clear sky. He was sent for one day, and, arriving, found Florence sitting with downcast eyes alone.

"My darling," exclaimed the young man, "tell me what troubles you. I know there is something."

Florence drew away from his arm with a little shrinking shudder.

"Please don't!" she murmured.

"Come now, Florence," he cried vigorously in a moment, "this thing must stop! I will know what has come between us—what has estranged us."

"Nothing—oh, nothing can ever estrange me from you, Gordon," said the girl, quivering. "But——"

"But? Well! I am waiting!"

"Oh, Gordon," she suddenly wailed, "don't be so harsh with me! If you only knew how I have suffered, how anxiously I have striven to do right, you would not be so unkind. Oh, I think you ought to help me instead of making it all so hard."

"If you will explain what all this is about, perhaps——"

"I will explain," she interrupted, rising. "Severini—you remember Severini?" she stopped herself to ask, in a pitiful, pathetic attempt to gain time.

"I should think so," remarked Durmot with sarcasm.

"Yes. Well, he—he is dying!"

"Dying?"

"And it is I who have killed him."

"You killed him!" shouted Durmot. "Look here, my girl, are you in your right senses? Come to yourself, Florence!" The lover was thoroughly alarmed.

Florence slowly shook her head. All her agitation had subsided and she was very calm.

"No, I am not mad, though you think I am. I see my duty very clearly. I don't expect you to see it in the same light. But—but—I have come to the conclusion that it would be very wicked of me to marry you. It would be—it would be like marrying over a grave."

Durmot stood in stony silence.

"I could never be happy; my conscience would never rest. If you will think of it you will see that it would be impossible."

And her faltering phrases broke against his obdurate silence as against a wall. She raised her eyes at last appealingly to his. But there was no help in them.

"I don't know," Durmot said finally, "what to think of you. Either your conscience is morbidly diseased or you are the cruellest creature God ever made."

"Oh, don't—don't say that," the girl wailed. And then she saw that he had turned towards the door. "You—you are not going from me so—without a word?" she faltered.

"What would you have me say?" was Gordon's savage reply. And then Florence was left alone.

Those were dreadful weeks that followed for her, but she was upborne by the consciousness of having done a duty that must have been sacred, because it was so very, very hard to perform. Gordon had already gone home without sending any sign of relenting or toward forgiveness. And thus it seemed to Florence that the sacrifice was fully consummated. To all that her elderly friend could say she only replied—

"I could not be happy over the wrecked life of another. They tell me that that poor man is dying for love of me. It seems to me impossible, incredible, and yet they assure me that it is so."

"Yes, it is rather incredible," said the elder lady drily. "Men have died, and worms have eaten them, but not usually for love."

"Yes," Florence humbly assented. "I am not worthy of it in any way. But it is so. And I—I cannot be happy knowing it."

"The logical process by which you reach that conclusion is not apparent to anyone but yourself."

At last the day came that preceded the one fixed upon for their departure from Paris. Florence was nursing her wretched thoughts in her own room when her chaperone precipitately entered it.

"Well?" she remarked, and she stopped, looking at Florence.

"What is it?" said the latter, listlessly.

"Prepare yourself for a surprise."

Florence looked as though nothing could ever cause her surprise again in this world.

"The Marchese Severini is in the hotel. I have just seen him."

Florence's face changed.

"He is not alone," pursued the elder lady. "In short, my dear, who do you suppose he has with him? His wife."

Florence rose.

"His wife?"

She trembled like an aspen.

The elder lady burst into irrepressible laughter.

"Actually! His wife; an English girl she is, too, with lots of money. I found out the whole affair before coming to you. It seems that the 'Torso,' poor fellow, was really very low about you, Florence. He was desperately smitten. But this other charming English girl appeared on the scene and she sympathised with him at first, and so, by degrees, a love affair sprang up. The engagement was announced and the marriage followed almost immediately. Well, what do you say to that?"

But Florence was almost past saying anything.

"Oh," she sobbed, "do you think Gordon would ever—will ever forgive me?"

The elder lady considered a moment severely.

"Well, when we get home I suppose I might go and try to make matters right with him. It will be the second time, observe. Positively, I don't know that I would ever have done such things for anyone but you."

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THE TENTH OF JUNE.

By John K. Leys, *Author of "In the Toils," "My Hindoo Friend," &c., &c.*

Illustrated by Raymond Potter.

SUMMARY.

Geoffrey Dundas—A young barrister.
Sir Arthur Chetwynd—A retired general and Geoffrey's friend.
Leila Chetwynd—His daughter.
Captain Bygham—An army officer, and cousin to Sir Arthur.
Lord Lavington—A friend of the General.
Amavati, the Rajah of Nagore—A Hindoo prince who visits Sir Arthur, and develops an unrequited love for Leila.
Chunder Sen—The Rajah's secretary.
Kuttapani—The Rajah's cook.

During the Indian Mutiny Sir Arthur, together with Geoffrey's father (since dead), took part in the looting of a Hindoo temple on the tenth of June, and on this day every year afterwards one of the Englishmen concerned, or some member of their families, is assassinated. On the last day of May, 1884, Amavati, the Rajah of Nagore, visits Sir Arthur, and Geoffrey tells him of the danger. Sir Arthur on learning from his lawyer that his cousin, Captain Bygham, to whom he had intended to marry Leila, is almost penniless, though representing himself to be rich, wills him but a small annuity. Chunder Sen makes it possible for Bygham to surreptitiously examine the will, and promises to help him out of the difficulty. On the tenth of June, Geoffrey goes to Wales, and is followed by Kuttapani, who attacks him in a lonely spot, and leaves him for dead. Geoffrey, however, recovers, and tracks him to a house in Westbourne Park, named Lancaster Villa, which transpires to be the headquarters of the Hindoo. Geoffrey asks the General for Leila's hand, but is refused, and goes abroad. On his return he meets the Rajah outside Lancaster Villa, and subsequently discovers that Captain Bygham is in league with the Hindoo. The General and Leila (believing that they are visiting Lord Lavington's yacht) are taken to a vessel chartered by the Hindoos, and are so caught in a trap.

CHAPTER XXI.

"I Cannot Let My Father Die."

General Chetwynd lay in his berth, sleepless, watching the round port-hole, as minute by minute the light increased. He was in that state of mind when a man is prepared for the worst. He was not unready to die. But Leila! He had to force himself not to think of her possible fate, lest he might go mad. He saw no hope, no possibility of rescue.

The one chance lay in his being able to make a sort of bargain with his murderers, giving his life that she might be spared. But what sort of bargain could he make? he asked himself, with the bitterness of despair.

His life was already forfeited to these savage fanatics, on account of that sacrilege in which he had taken part some thirty years before. Time had had no effect in lessening their thirst for vengeance. They would, he well knew, put him to death without mercy, as readily as if they had caught him but yesterday, red-handed, amid the smoking ruins of their temple. His fate was already decided. How, then, could he make a bargain on behalf of Leila? He had nothing to offer in exchange for her liberty and her life.

Gradually the light from the port-hole grew stronger, till the various objects in the cabin stood out clearly in the summer dawn.

A noise—faint at first, but now more decided—a noise as of a rat gnawing at the upper panel of the door. A tool, in the hands of an inexperienced workman, was slowly cutting away at the thin panel.

The General understood. His gaolers wanted to communicate with him, and they were afraid to enter the cabin. He had no weapon; but he thought with a grim smile that they were wise. Yet this did not deceive him. He knew that his murderers had only to thrust the muzzle of a loaded rifle or revolver through the hole in the door, and he would be completely at their mercy.

"Sahib!"

The General paid no heed.

"Sahib!"

Perfect silence.

"Let the Lord Sahib speak with his servant. It may be well for him—and well for the lady, his daughter."

"What is it?" said the General. He did not stir from the berth. His tone was as cold as if he had been speaking to a servant who had committed some fault.

"I wish to converse with the Sahib."

"Who are you?"

"I was known as the Secretary of the Rajah of Nagore, Chunder Sen."

"Ah! I understand."

"But I am now the head priest of the Brahmins who had the care of the Temple at Churruckpore."

"I guessed as much! I have sheltered a couple of murderers—that's all."

"Not so, Sahib! The Rajah did not know until he came on board last night who his secretary really was. He had no part in your capture. He did not know that any such measure was intended."

"Indeed!" said Sir Arthur ironically. "Perhaps you have made him a prisoner, too?"

"He is not at present under personal restraint," said Chunder Sen gravely. "We respect his rank too much to treat him with discourtesy. But he is not the master of this vessel; and he does not share our counsels."

"I may believe that or not; but it matters nothing to me. What is it you want to say to me? Say it, and be gone!"

"You are aware, Sahib," said the soft, silky voice of the Hindoo, "that your life is justly forfeited. The penalty of violating a shrine of Vishnu is death."

"Did you take the trouble of drilling a hole in the door to tell me that?"

"But Vishnu has already been avenged in part," went on the Hindoo, as if the other had not spoken. "There have been many victims. We are ready to spare you, and land you on the coast of France uninjured, if you agree to one condition."

"Ay? And what may that be?"

The General raised himself on his elbow, his heart beating high with expectation. He was known to be a wealthy man. Visions of liberty for himself and Leila through the payment of a ransom were already crowding into his mind.

"The condition is a very easy one," answered the Hindoo. "It involves neither loss nor degradation. It is merely this—that you give your written consent to the marriage of your daughter to your kinsman Captain Bygham, with a suitable dowry."

A cry burst from the General's lips—a cry, not of wrath, or agony, but of horror. In a moment he had sprung out of the berth, and stood behind the barred door, his arms crossed on his breast, his teeth clenched, his eyes flashing fire.

A cry burst from the General's lips.

"Bygham! It is impossible! He cannot be an accomplice of those wretches. I cannot believe it. A man of my own blood! No! Reginald Bygham cannot have descended so low. He cannot be mixed up with this abominable outrage. It cannot be!—And yet, why should those Hindoos make common cause with him if he is not their friend? Why should they make it a condition that *he* should marry Leila,

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if he is not one of them? He marry Leila!"—All this passed through his mind in an instant.

"I would rather see my daughter lying in her coffin than give her hand to that man," he said aloud. At that moment Captain Byngham seemed more hateful to the high-minded soldier than even Chunder Sen.

"You will think the matter over, Sahib; and if the young lady is willing——"

"I shall *not* think the matter over, you scoundrel! It is wasting your time to talk to me. We are in your power; and of course you know what that means. What security have I that if I signed such a paper as you tell me you want, my life would be spared? None! He who could play the part of a traitor once would play it again. Yet I would give a good deal to know one thing."

"And what is that, Sahib?"

"Only this—Why do you ask this thing from me? What interest is it of yours who my daughter marries? What is Captain Byngham to you?"

A low laugh was at first the only answer. Then Chunder Sen deigned to speak.

"The noble Captain is our friend," he said with a sneer. "From him we knew of the arrangement you made to sail with Lord Lavington, and we laid our plans accordingly. There was an agreement made between him and us long ago that he should inform us of all your movements."

"I have spoken my last word."

The answer to this was a groan.

"And this was to be his reward!" said the General, as if to himself.

"The Miss Sahib is to be his reward."

"Never!"

"You cannot prevent it. Captain Byngham is to come on board to-night and take her away."

"The miscreant! But it will be in vain. She will not marry him. He will never touch my money."

"The Miss Sahib will gladly marry him."

"Don't you see that she will look upon this ally of yours as a monster—that she would rather die than touch him?"

"She will not look upon him as a monster," replied the Hindoo, insensibly lowering his voice. "She will be told that he heard of your predicament through the English servant, Brown, whom we sent ashore before we left Plymouth, saying that the Rajah found a servant had been brought from London for him, and that he was not wanted.

"Brown knows nothing of the real state of the case; but the Captain will pretend that his suspicions were aroused by what Brown told him, that he followed the yacht, found her and boarded her, and discovered that you had run your heads into a snare. He will then give her to understand that he had to surrender his fortune in order to ransom her; and he will grieve with her that we refused to allow you to be ransomed also."

"Miss Chetwynd is not a fool; she will see through that shallow pretence," said Sir Arthur contemptuously. "Besides, my trustees will see through it. They would never consent to the marriage."

"They will be forced to consent to it. Captain Byngham will take the young lady to his own house, and detain her there for some days on the pretence that he is trying to get a man-of-war to follow this vessel and save you. By that tim will be too late to save you. The steamer we mean to abandon. But after a time your daughter will come to understand that she must marry Captain Byngham. If it should be necessary he can easily make representations to your trustees, which will make them glad to consent to the match."

The General was silent. He was amazed at the cunning and audacity of his enemies, and for the moment overwhelmed by the awful revelation that had just been made to him. He felt that he was totally unable to do anything to save his daughter from the fate that had been prepared for her; and indeed he saw that it might be better for her to marry her cousin, bad as he was, than remain in the hands of the Hindoos.

One thing only he resolved upon. Leila must pass his cabin door as she left the vessel. It would be impossible to prevent his calling out a few words that must reach her ears. He would not blacken Byngham's character to her as yet, on the bare word of a treacherous Hindoo. But if he heard the Captain's voice on board, if he heard the girl leave her cabin, he would take care to let her know the real character and motives of the man who was pretending to rescue her.

Once more Chunder Sen's voice was heard in the stillness.

"Does the Sahib, then, consent to this marriage? It would be much better for him to do so, and save his life."

But the General was convinced that he could place no dependence on the truth of what the Hindoo might tell him; It was possible that all he had heard was a mere lie designed to draw the written consent from him. And besides, if he did sign the paper, it was quite likely that the faithless Hindoos, having got all they wanted, would shoot him without mercy He made no reply.

Again the Hindoo pressed his argument—in any case the Miss Sahib's fate was sealed; but the Sahib might yet save his life by giving his consent to her marriage. The General could not understand his persistence. He could not know that one of the most powerful of the priests of Vishnu, who had not come to England, a subject of the Rajah, was bitterly opposed to his sovereign's contemplated marriage with a Christian, and had sent word to his fellow priests that they must at all costs hinder this alliance.

It was because Chunder Sen doubted the ability of Captain Byngham to force the girl into marrying him, that he was so anxious to get the written consent of the General, which might be of the greatest service, both with regard to Leila and with regard to her trustees.

The General, not knowing the primary motive of the Hindoos, wondered at the fidelity to their ally; but he was not the man to save his life by becoming a party to a vile plot against his own daughter.

"Go away!" he cried out impatiently.

"It is enough," came back the answer. "I have spoken my last word to you. You shall die before the morrow is one hour old."

The Hindoo's voice ceased and it seemed as if he must be gone, but no sound told of his coming or his going. To the General it was almost as if an evil spirit, a formless intangible creature with a voice, but no other part or attribute of man, had been tempting him.

"They may spare themselves the trouble of talking to me again," said the General to himself, as he strode back and forward over the narrow floor of his cabin. "I don't believe they would keep their promises; at least I have no security that they would. That way there is no hope. God help us! God help us!"

Some hours later the fastenings of the door of Leila's cabin were quietly undone, and she saw the handle of the door turn half way round; but as she had bolted the door it did not open.

"It is I, Miss Chetwynd," said a voice she knew well.

"You! I own I am surprised to think that the Rajah of Nagore should become an accomplice of common murderers!" cried Leila in a voice of scorn.

"You do me injustice. Indeed you do. I only beg you to open the door, and give me a hearing."

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Lightly touched it with his lips.

"Do not trust him, Leila!" called out a clear, strong voice. It was the General's. He had overheard what passed.

"You may trust me; indeed you may," said Amavati.

Something in his voice carried conviction to the girl's mind.

"I am not afraid, papa!" she called out in a tone clear and strong as her father's had been. And with that she drew the bolt.

The Rajah entered, and stood respectfully at the further end of the tiny cabin.

"Will the daughter of the great soldier hear me?"

There was the same calm pride in the Rajah's manner now as there had been when he had stood before this girl an honoured guest under her father's roof.

"It seems hardly necessary, but speak if you will."

There was a world of scorn in the girl's tone, in the half raised glance of her eye; a world of contempt in the upright carriage and the turn of her slender neck.

"I assure you on the honour of a prince of the House of Sastri that I was wholly ignorant of this outrage. I knew something was plotted against your father; but I thought he was safe for this year. Like him I thought I was coming on board Lord Lavington's yacht. Like him I was deceived. The truth appeared to me when it was too late."

"You knew something, yet you did not warn us!" exclaimed the girl.

"He needed no warning; he knew of the danger that threatened him. But I did not imagine that the avenger would strike this year."

"What avenger do you mean?" asked the girl, turning a shade paler as she spoke. "What was the danger that threatened him?"

In a few rapid words Amavati told Leila the story of the burnt temple and the vendetta of the priests.

"As for me," concluded the Rajah, "though I knew such a conspiracy existed, I had no share in it."

"I believe you, Rajah!" cried the generous-hearted girl, holding out her hand to him.

He took it, bent down, and lightly touched it with his lips. Leila did not snatch her hand away, but neither did she allow it to remain in the Rajah's grasp an instant after this act of homage had been paid.

"I have not yet said that which I came here to say," said the Rajah with his eyes on the floor.

"What is there to say?" asked Leila softly. "We are in the power of these men. If they choose to kill us, as it seems likely they will, then we must die."

Amavati Sastri lifted his eyes and met those of the girl.

"Pardon me. They would neither wish, nor dare, to lay a finger on the wife or the father-in-law of the Rajah of Nagore."

Leila started. Her hands convulsively clasped each other in front of her dress; and she stared at the Rajah as if she hardly understood his meaning. His attitude was that of a man conscious of his power; but before Leila's clear frank gaze his eyes fell.

"What did you say?" came in hardly audible tones from her lips.

"I only tell you the truth. The way to save your father, and the only way, so far as I can see, is for him to become my near relative. I do not think that you personally are in any danger. At least these men gave me a promise that you should not be harmed. But your father is in danger, in great danger. If you promised to become my wife I could protect him."

Suddenly the girl's face changed. Distrust spoke in it, then contempt.

"So *this* is the price you ask for your treachery!" she exclaimed.

"You do me wrong," said the Hindoo; and though his voice was calm, it was plain that he was deeply moved. "I have told you that although I knew your father had enemies of our race I was not one of them, and had no knowledge of this plot against his life. Besides, you forget, I was at the time your father's guest."

This was said as if such a crime against the laws of hospitality was simply unimaginable. Once more the sincerity of the Rajah's voice and look banished Leila's mistrust.

"Forgive me," she said, "if I wrong you. I am ashamed to think that I should have doubted you again—but indeed it is all so strange, so horrible, that I don't know what to think, or what to believe."

"It is natural that you should suspect me, seeing that——." He was going to say, "seeing that the chief conspirator is Chunder Sen," but he stopped himself. If Leila knew that fact, he thought her suspicions might return.

"No; I suspect you no longer!" cried Leila. "I have insulted you shamefully by thinking you could have taken part in so base a plot. Once more I say I trust you. But, my father! Oh, Rajah, think! There must be some way of saving him! His whole fortune——."

The Rajah shook his head.

"It is not wealth they seek, but revenge," he said.

"Yes, I know; I know." Unconsciously she was picking at the bosom of her dress with her fingers, as she might have done had she been suffering an extremity of pain. "I know," she repeated; "but they are men. They have hearts in their breasts. I will kneel to them. I will offer my life for his."

"You could not expect me to help you to such a sacrifice; but it is not necessary. You have only to consent to be my wife. I love you, Leila; I have loved you since first I saw you. I will be true to you. I will become a Christian for your sake. I will make you happy."

The girl put her hands over her eyes, as if to shut out the pictures his words brought before her mind.

"I would like to be alone."

She stood there, without speaking; and the Rajah said no more.

"Give me time—time to think of it. But why should I ask for time? If there is no other way——"

"Believe me, there is none."

"Then I must consent. Yes; I cannot let my father die. I should be his murderer! Yes; I consent!"

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They called out to each other.

She drew herself up, and gave the Hindoo her hand, as a pledge of her good faith; but as his soft palm touched it a strong shudder passed through her frame, and she made as though she would withdraw it.

A gleam had lighted up the Rajah's dark eyes. But now it suddenly died out. He made no effort to detain her hand beyond an instant. A sigh rose to his lips.

"Tell my father that he shall not die," she said, "but do not tell him the way in which he is to be saved—at least, not yet. Make them set him at liberty at once, if you can. And now, please, I would like to be alone."

CHAPTER XXII.

A Chivalrous Knight.

The slow hours dragged themselves along. Leila never could remember afterwards what her thoughts had been during that time of terror. She was hardly capable of coherent thinking. She dared not think of herself as the Ranee of Nagore, lest she should be tempted to repent of the sacrifice she had voluntary offered.

Still the steamer ploughed its way slowly through the green water. From the porthole Leila could see nothing but a waste of waves. Once, when the sea seemed calmer, she opened the porthole and looked out. The sun was shining on the water—a million waves were tumbling this way and that, as if they were the children of the sea at play. Far, far away the sun's rays fell on the topsails of a passing ship. All was lightness, brightness, freedom. The narrow cabin prison seemed more hateful than before, from the sight of the wide, unfettered sea. The girl sank down on the couch beneath the window, and for the first time since her imprisonment began, the tears fell like rain from her eyes.

As the afternoon wore on the sky became again overcast. Black clouds rose up from the horizon, bringing rain. It suddenly became cold. And the wind rose, whistling drearily in the sailless rigging.

There was no change for the captives. From time to time they called out to each other, to assure themselves that so far the other was safe; and it was a comfort to the girl to hear her father's strong, manly voice, singing out cheery words to encourage her.

"Keep up your heart, my dear!" he would cry out. "We'll find a way out of this mess yet."

Or again—

"I don't believe they will dare to touch me when it comes to the point; and I don't think they will hurt you in any case."

Or—

"I do believe they only want a heavy ransom. What else could they want? When they think we are hungry and dispirited they will begin talking about a cheque. We shall be landed in France to-morrow, you'll see!"

But it was only the sound of the old General's voice that was sweet to Leila's ears. His words had no meaning for her. She knew they were meaningless, merely invented to prevent her from giving way to despair. "Aye," she said to herself, "it may be we shall be at liberty to-morrow, able to walk about and breathe the air. But I shall be a slave, a life-long slave!"

Suddenly a thought came to her.

"I can try!" she cried out; and springing to the cabin-door she knocked on it as hard as she could with her tiny fist.

A step sounded in the passage outside.

"I want to see the Rajah!" she called out. "Go and tell the Rajah I must see him."

In a very short time the door opened, and Amavati stood before her.

"I have sent for you, Rajah," began the girl, "to beg you to think—to consider—— Would you not rather——?"

The words would not come. She was trembling from head to foot with excitement; and though she was eager to speak, it seemed as though she were in a nightmare, and could not utter the words.

She sat down and tried to calm herself.

"Amavati," she said at length, "I believe you are a good and honourable man. Will you not make an effort to save my father and me, without demanding this sacrifice from me? Which would you rather have, my lifelong gratitude and respect, or—my hatred?"

"Your hatred? No. Why should you hate me?"

"I am certain I should hate you if I were—if we were married. If I became your bride, you would find that you had purchased a slave, not married a wife. I tell you frankly, I could never love you, though I have liked and in some ways admired you. Why should you wish to forfeit my respect, in the vain effort to gain my love? It can never, never be yours. I may leave my father and my country, according to my promise, and go to live with you in India. But I should be longing for death all the time. I should soon die. You would not have the poor prisoner long."

The Rajah stood with his eyes cast down, dumb as a statue.

"Think! In our country we have stories—I daresay you have them in Hindostan—about brave knights who risked their lives to save maidens from peril. Did you ever hear that one of them made it a condition, before striking a blow, that she should marry him? It would have been reckoned a shame. And you are not without nobility of spirit, Rajah. You have some magnanimity. It is unworthy of you to drive a bargain with a girl for her father's life."

She paused, and waited for the Hindoo to speak. It was some time before he opened his lips; and when he did so his voice was low and indistinct.

"What would you have me do?" he asked without lifting his eyes from the ground.

"Do? Try to save our lives! you have influence with these men. You are a prince of their nation. They dare not touch you; and you can threaten them. Tell them that if they kill my father, you will denounce them, and they will suffer death themselves. Tell them that you are our friend, and that you will count an injury done to us as if——. Oh! you know what to say, what to do. Pretend, if you like, that I am to be your bride. But do not force me to marry you. No! Oh, no! Do not do that. Do not force me!"

"I have failed."

A heavy sigh, long suppressed, burst from the Rajah's breast.

"Leila," he said, "you have conquered me. Henceforth I will not seek to marry you, since I see you regard a union with me with abhorrence. I will be content—it

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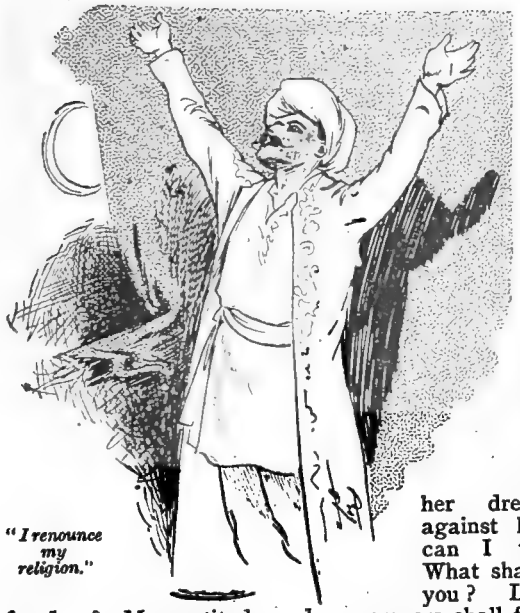

"I renounce my religion."

is I who say it—I will be content with your goodwill. I will do my best to save you and your father; but I ask no reward."

"Oh, how can I thank you!" cried Leila; and she sprang up, her eyes filling with tears, and came close to the Rajah, so close that her dress brushed against his. "How can I thank you? What shall I not owe you? Life, honour, freedom? My gratitude and my prayers shall follow you as long as I live, wherever you go! I shall be always thinking of you—always thinking that if it had not been for you—— And always with the thought of you will come a grateful wish, and a prayer for God to bless you!"

"I will go now; but do not be sure that I can help you. What I can do, I will do. You may be sure of that. But these men are not my subjects, and they are priests. They care nothing for money, in comparison with revenge, and they care not hing for death. I very much fear—but I will try."

"Yes; and you will let me know as soon as possible whether you can save us?"

"Yes; I will send you a message," said the Rajah; and he slowly left the cabin.

The light grew mellow; it was the afternoon. The radiance that broke for a few minutes from a watery sun was pale and dim; it was drawing towards evening—and no word, no message from the Rajah. No sound was heard but the throb of the propeller—and occasionally the General's voice, as he called out to know how his daughter fared.

Leila had not dared to tell him that the Rajah was making efforts in their favour. Of course, all they said to each other was overheard; and she feared that it might embarrass the Rajah if she openly proclaimed that he was going to save them if he could. Besides, her father would naturally suspect the Rajah, as she herself had done. He would not believe in his good faith, and would most likely receive the news with a burst of mocking laughter.

The evening was now fading into twilight, and still the Rajah did not come. Leila had long since become anxious for the success of his mission. Minute by minute the suspense became more intolerable.

The weather was now completely changed. The wind had risen hour by hour; and the steamer was rolling a good deal. Her speed had been slackened. It seemed to Leila that she was hardly making any way through the water. The rain, too, had begun to fall, in small close drops, that made no sound on the planking overhead.

It must have been eight o'clock in the evening when Leila was startled by a slight rustling sound at her cabin door. She glanced round, and saw that something white had been pushed under the door. In a moment she had pounced upon it, and carried it to the porthole.

By the fading light she could just make out the words, scratched in pencil:

"*I have failed.*"

The girl gave a low cry of horror and dismay, and sank down on the red velvet couch, pale as a sheet.

But the next moment she was shaking the cabin door, and knocking loudly to attract attention. As soon as she heard a step outside, she called out that she wanted to see the Rajah.

"What do you want with him?"

It was her father's voice, from the opposite cabin.

"I want to thank him, father—and to ask him to do something for me. He is our friend, and has been trying to use his influence with these people to save our lives; but he says he can't."

"You astonish me, Leila. I thought he was the head and front of the conspiracy."

"No, papa; I am sure he is not."

She was interrupted by the entrance of the Rajah himself.

Even in the dim light that came in through the porthole, she could make out that he was in a state of great agitation.

"You sent for me?" he began.

"Yes, I want to thank you—I thank you just as warmly, just as sincerely, as if you had been completely successful. You have done what you could. No one can do more. I suppose these men *have* no hearts?"

"They have not!" burst out the Rajah. "They are demons, not men. From this moment I renounce my religion. I will become a Christian. I will not have such men for my priests. They have broken faith with me—or mean to break it."

"Did you tell them you would accuse them of murder?"

"I did. I used every argument I could think of."

"Rajah"—the girl's voice sank so low that it barely reached her own ears—"Rajah, if it is necessary; if my father would be safe as your relation——"

"No, Leila," said Amavati, in a voice of deep sadness. "If I tell you the truth I shall confess that I was wrong. My marriage with you would be extremely unpopular with my subjects, and with all Hindoos, for reasons connected with the dynasty. I believe they would kill you rather than allow you to become my wife."

"Then we are lost!"

The Rajah was silent.

"You said the priests had broken faith with you; how was that?"

"They promised me, weeks ago, that you should not be harmed. And now I find that there is a fresh plot on foot. I cannot learn the details, nor even the precise nature of it; but I believe you are its object. I believe you are to leave the vessel soon."

"Oh, Rajah, save me!"

Her cry rang through the cabin. Her father called out to know what was the matter. She had to answer him, and reassure him; and that helped to steady her nerves.

"Promise me one thing, Rajah," she said, clinging to the Hindoo's arm as he was about to leave the cabin—"promise me that if there is no other way—rather than allow me to fall alive into the hands of these men, or any of their associates, you will kill me yourself—promise me!"

No shudder passed through the girl's body now, as she seized the Hindoo's hand in her own. She knew him to be her friend, and she had none but him to look to.

He gazed steadily into her eyes, and answered:

"I promise you. And I promise you this—you shall not die unavenged."

"What do you mean?"

But the Rajah had already left her.

He had not told her all.

He had spared her the awful news that the priests of Vishnu had decided that ere the first hour of the new day, the Tenth of June, had gone by, Sir Arthur Chetwynd would cease to live.

(To be continued.)

To prevent unnecessary labour, and consequent disappointment, to any readers of this paper, who in the past have forwarded original stories for insertion, we would take this opportunity of saying that our arrangements for the provision of matter for "Short Stories" are complete for some time to come.

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The Soul of the Cat

YES, John Ling was a lonely one. He had friends in plenty, and relatives, too, for that matter, but Ling had his own views on matrimony, and he didn't believe anybody could be happy without a wife. It was strange why he had so suddenly taken on that belief, for hadn't he lived fifteen years away from his own Flowery Land! Of course he had.

He came first to Lamb Flats and went to work on the diggings, but he couldn't stand it, for he used to feel the strange white devils at night punching him in the back. So he gave his claim to a relative and travelled down country to Sydney.

He was idle for a while, and then started in to sell soap to the laundrymen, until finally he got enough cash to rent a store. He put out his red sign, with the fluttering red streamers on it to keep the evil ones way, and he became store-keeper. Every night for years he had crawled into his little bunk, curtained off at the back of the store, and after comforting himself with the opium he loved so well he had fallen asleep, to dream of pretty Chinese girls, tottering on pink clouds across the water and stretching their arms out to him.

He often thought of China and the home life there, and he used to count the money in his trunk and wonder when he would have enough to go back and buy a koonfoo's rank and wear a cap with the red button of the third degree. Then he thought he would buy with some of his money the prettiest girl in the province, and she would have feet so small that she couldn't walk at all unless she had a strong servant holding each hand.

He often gambled in the hope that he would win, and he burnt prayer sticks before his kat god that he might have luck, but he might just as well have saved the sticks, for luck never came. So persistently did he lose that more than once he was tempted to let one of the burning prayer sticks fall over against the god and burn it, but he was afraid lest the deceit should be discovered and the god seek a just revenge.

One day there came into his store a white girl who lived in a house in the same street. She had hair like the gold he used to dig out of Lamb Flats.

"I say, John," she said, "me mother's run out o' sope, an' she's up to her neck in washin'. Gimme a bar!"

Ling was smitten with a great love. He remembered having seen this girl go past his store many times, but he never had such a chance as this to speak to her.

"You mommee want sope?" he asked. "She washee?"

"Yes; I want er bar, an' I want it quick."

"Alle lite," said Ling, and he clattered behind the narrow counter and pulled out from a shelf two bars of soap.

"You takkee two," he said. "No worry, you takkee; you sabe?" and he pushed the soap and the five pennies she had laid down away from him. Then he went on: "I likkee you; you heap nice! Lat you name?"

"So I get the sope for nuttin', do I, John?" said the girl. "Well, me name's Maggie Brown, if yer wanter know."

Ling looked at her with admiring eyes. Then he pointed to the soap and pennies, and said simply:

"You takkee. I heap lakkee you; sabe? You clum 'glain?"

"Yes, I sabe, John," said the girl, "an' I'll come again."

So she went out and Ling went to the door and looked after her until she had disappeared round the corner. Then he went back behind the narrow counter and sat down on a stool. He rested his elbows on a pile of paper, sunk his chin in his hands and thought very hard. His thinking amounted to something, for he went to the little room curtained off at the back of the store, and out of the big camphor wood chest he pulled some carefully folded clothes. He was a new man when he came out into the store again, and a couple of his countrymen, who had dropped in to have a friendly chat and a smoke, began to chaff him.

His old cloth blouse, with the shiny place on the back where his well-oiled cue had hung, lay in a heap on the floor with his old pow tail and coarse trousers; instead, he wore clothes of brocaded dark blue silk and his sandals were like those of a koonfoo. A cold wind was blowing up the street. It made him shiver, but he stood his ground and watched for the coming of Maggie Brown.

Every day for a week he watched, until on the eighth day he saw her running by with a shawl over her head and a jug in her hand. "Hi-lo," he cried, "hi-lo, Maggie Brown! you com' nichue?"

"Hello, John; how's things? I'll see yer when I get th' old man's beer," and she dashed on, while Ling went in and waited.

After awhile she came in with a rush.

"You lakkee China candy?" began Ling before she could say anything. "Heap good!" and he pushed a queer little box of keung towards her. "I lakkee you," he continued, while he picked at the gilt buttons on his blouse. "I bling you nice close, heap nice, you sabe? Makkee you nice close, you dless heap nice, sabe? You mally me, you have heap money."

"Marry you, John? Me old woman would pull the pigtail out of your head if she heard you talking like that."

"You mally me bimeby," said Ling, as though he felt sure he would win.

"So long, John," she said, as she went out munching the sweets. That was the first of the queer courtship. It struck Maggie seriously, as though she thought she might do worse.

"I don't know but what I'm marry the old chap," she said to herself. "I'll get all the clothes an' money I want."

There was a cat which used to sleep under Ling's counter. She grew fat on the scraps of chow suet and chue yunk which fell from the table, and altogether lived a life of peace. But the day Ling proposed to Maggie Brown the cat's manner changed. Instead of sleeping under the counter all the day she took to walking on the counter, mewing uneasily in a wailing voice which filled the room with a distressful sound.

Then she would pause in her walk, and sitting on her haunches glare at Ling with starting eyes. Once or twice he drove her away, but she came back and glared until her eyes turned from green to purple. Once he struck her with his bamboo t'ung, and she retreated to a high shelf and watched him.

"The evil one possesses her," said Ling, and he burnt more prayer sticks before his kashat Joss, but the wailing of the cat never ceased. She crept under Ling's bed that night and scratched at the matting on the floor; she paraded the little room, and her big shining eyes seemed to light up the dark place. From that night the cat was never at rest, and Ling became so stricken with a silent terror that he would go out into the street rather than cross her path.

He forgot about the cat a couple of days later, when Maggie Brown came in. She was better dressed than usual.

"Hello, John," she began, "I had a row with the old woman, and I've clim out. I'm dead tired of gettin' jumped on. Now, if you wanter marry me on ther square, I'm with you."

"You mally me," asked Ling, while a smile crept over his face. "Allee lite, I mally you."

"But I'll tell you, John," the girl went on, "you've got to cut that pigtail off and wear proper clothes. You got to be pretty near a white man. You got to be as white as clothes kin make you, an' you got to treat me white, too, or I'll shake you!"

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Ling didn't want to lose his cue and he fought against what he considered a sacrilege, but he found Maggie relentless.

"I curl him up so," he said, as he twisted it about his head; "'n I puttee on hlat, so," and he pulled an old slouch hat down over his head, "'n noblody slee him, ha?"

No, even that wouldn't do, and Maggie went away saying: "I'm going up to a lady friend's o' mine ter stay ternite, John, an' I'll see you to-morrer, an' if ther pigtail don't go I don't git married, see?"

Ling didn't quite see, but he thought a lot. He thought Maggie was the prettiest girl he had ever seen. There was nothing ch'an about her. She had fine blue eyes, a trim figure and a shock of golden hair that attracted the Chinaman. The old cat jumped on the counter and howled and stared at him, and he went out to get away from those green eyes. He went to the Joss house and burned a lot of prayer sticks and paper. He made up his mind quickly after that, almost ran down the dark, creaking steps and across the way to where the barber lived.

"Take off this thing!" he said, when he sat down on the stool in front of the little razors and scissors.

"What!" said the barber, "are you crazy, or have the foreign devils got you too?"

"Cut it off, I tell you! Are you not here to do such work as this?"

"No, that is wrong. I knew your mother. What would she say if I did it? Her curses would come to me as well as to you, unworthy son."

Ling ran out while his courage lasted. He went to a Kwang-tung man who lived near Pell street and had no cue.

"Cut this thing off!" he said; he did not need to beg this time.

"Ha, ha!" laughed the Kwang-tung man, "you are going to be one of us; good!" and he picked up a big pair of shears. Snip! and Ling's cue was gone, cut close to his head. Out Ling ran, leaving his cue behind him. He went into his store and sat down to think, when up jumped the cat. Her eyes were yellow this time, and she howled mournfully.

"Get away, you evil thing!" and he pushed her off with a stick. He did not sleep that night; he dreamed strange things and saw strange sights; he thought of his home in far-off China, and his mother and the little Chinese maidens whom he had known before he came to the new country. He smoked and saw faces in the clouds. In the morning his eyes were heavy, and red with the opium. He lay in his bunk and smoked the opium until he heard a voice. It sounded as if it came from a great distance. It said:

"Hullo, where's John? In the back room? All right!"

The curtains were pulled back and Maggie Brown came in.

"How's yer pigtail?"

"I cut him off. He glone," said Ling half stupidly.

"That's good. I knew you'd come round. Git up if yer a-goin ter git married."

Ling had a vague idea that he was very happy. The opium had brought a peaceful feeling, but he was rather stupid. Maggie sat on the edge of the bunk and the cat walked across the room with stately tread, glaring at her. She paused at her feet, and at one bound was on her lap. "Hullo, pussy!" she said, putting her face down and stroking the fur. Like a flash a paw shot out; five hooked, sharp claws were unsheathed and dragged across the girl's cheek. She gave a frightened scream, and when Ling looked he saw the red lines down her face, from which blood was oozing. And the cat walked slowly across the floor with the same stately tread.

"I've got a nice-looking face now!" said Maggie, "and I think I'll have that cat killed."

"Less," said Ling, "kill him," and he rose dreamily and tried to drive the cat out, but she wouldn't go. He gave it up, and cursed the spirit which possessed the cat. "Some enemy of mine has died," he thought, "and his soul has gone into the cat." Maggie washed the blood from her face and put on three long strips of plaster, and then they went to the little mission house where they were married.

They went back to the store then. There was a letter on the counter near the scales. It had come from China and was for Yee John Ling. The cat sat near it and would not move. Ling pushed her away with a stick, but she came back. He was afraid to put his hand out for the letter, so he pulled it towards him with his pipe. It was from his native town.

"Your good mother is dead," it ran; "the scourge devil carried her away. It was her will that you return and marry the girl she has betrothed to you."

The letter fell from Ling's hands; he looked up and saw the cat still staring at him.

"My mother's soul is there, to curse me," he whispered to himself, backing towards the door.

"It is she! She has come across the big water because I did not return," and he kept stepping backwards.

"The curse has come upon me!" And he felt for his cue. Then he looked at Maggie and saw the marks of the claws. With a shriek he opened the door and rushed out!

"John's gone crazy!" said Maggie to the attendant. "It's the opium, I guess. It knocks 'em all when they get the habit."

Ling never came back, so Maggie patched a truce with her mother and went back to the tenement. Nobody but the minister knows she is Mrs. Yee John Ling, and the new sign which swings over the door of the little store tells everyone who looks up at it that Sun Quong sells Chinese groceries there. Sun Quong was the attendant.

Pearson's Fresh Air Fund.

PEARSON'S FRESH AIR FUND is in the fourth year of its existence, and each year the field of its influence extends farther and farther. For the first two years the little children of the London slums were the only ones who benefited by it, but last year its usefulness was increased, and 25,000 street arabs from some of our largest provincial towns were by its agency able to enjoy a day in the country. This was in addition to the 49,074 London children, making 74,074 in all.

This year arrangements are being made to give at least 80,000 children in London and the large provincial towns a day in the country, and not only a day in the country, but plenty to eat and drink during that time—no small consideration to these city waifs, to whom an unlimited supply of beef-pie, bread and butter, jam, cake, and milk, is, indeed, an unknown experience. The money required to do this is £3,240, which we have every confidence will be subscribed by the readers of PEARSON'S WEEKLY, STHORT SORIES, HOME NOTES, and our other papers.

In making arrangements for these outings, Mr. C. Arthur Pearson guarantees that half the amount needed for each town shall be given, whether or not it is sent by the readers of our several papers. I have no doubt, however, that the money will come in, as it has done in former years, for, I think, of all charities that which benefits little children especially touches people's hearts. I feel sure that it will appeal to the readers of SHORT STORIES, who know how much their own little friends delight in the country.

If children in happy circumstances and surrounded by every pleasure do this, what must such an outing be to the small gutter child, with no idea beyond the squalid court or alley in which he lives?

But to return to the disposal of the money which we hope will be entrusted to us. This year, all towns with a population of 200,000 more have been included in the list of the Fresh Air Fund. Our readers are so widespread that I am sure they will be glad to know which towns these are. The following is the list:—London, 40,000; Birmingham, 5,000; Liverpool, 5,000; Manchester, 5,000; Glasgow, 5,000; Belfast, 4,000; Leeds, 3,000; Sheffield, 3,000; Edinburgh, 2,000; Hull, 2,000; Bradford, 2,000; Nottingham, 2,000; Bristol, 2,000.

I give this list hoping that readers will interest themselves in the especial branches nearest to them, and will go and see the real delight experienced by the children.

Now, with reference to the expenditure, it cost but ninepence to give each child a day in the country, with plenty of food and drink. You will understand, therefore, that every farthing of the money sent is given to the children, the whole of the heavy working expenses being paid by PEARSON'S and the Ragged School Union.

Every little helps, even if it bebut nine pence for one child. To those who are blessed with means I would say that £8 2s. gives a day's enjoyment to a complete party of 200 children with a proportionate number of teachers to take care of them.

Subscriptions addressed to PEARSON'S WEEKLY Buildings, Henrietta Street, W.C., will be gratefully acknowledged in the columns of PEARSON'S WEEKLY.

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RAISING THE DEAD.

TOWARDS the middle of the fourteenth century there suddenly appeared in Florence a personage calling himself Dr. Attrapeccini. Whence he came no one knew. His name indicated an Italian origin; but, from his accent in speaking, one would have supposed him to be a German, while his long beard, grave expression, and majestic bearing seemed suggestive of the Orient. Certain manuscripts, indeed, declare him to have been a native of Gascony; but the authenticity of the manuscripts has not been proved.

Whatever might be his nationality, however, the doctor had no sooner arrived in Florence than he caused to be announced, with a grand flourish of trumpets, cornets and drum, that on Tuesday, the 1st of May, at precisely six o'clock in the morning, he would repair to the city's cemetery, and there restore to life five persons of his own choosing.

At last the excitement grew so intense that the podestat or chief magistrate of Florence resolved to send for Dr. Attrapeccini and demand an explanation. A man who was able to restore five dead persons to life could have no difficulty in guessing what was passing in the mind of a podestat, and, accordingly, the magistrate was just about to strike his gong to summon an usher, when the doctor himself was announced.

"You come just in time, doctor," said the magistrate; "I was about to send for you."

"I knew it, my lord, and wished to anticipate your orders," was the reply, uttered in a calm tone that filled the podestat with amazement.

He recovered himself, however, and was going to interrogate the new-comer when the latter exclaimed:

"I understand, my lord, that some of your people here have doubts of my science, and even of my honesty—in fact, that I am suspected of coming to Florence for the purpose of making dupes."

"Something of that kind has been intimated," replied the magistrate.

"They say, moreover," continued Dr. Attrapeccini, "that I intend to decamp in a day or two, before the 1st of May."

"That also has been said," assented the podestat.

"You can understand," said the stranger slowly, "that I owe it to myself to put an end to these reports. I have come to request of you that a guard of ten, twenty, thirty or more men be stationed round my house so as to make it impossible for me to leave Florence before releasing from their tombs five persons, as I have promised. You cannot say that my request is an unreasonable one, since you had determined before seeing me to have me watched."

"Your request is granted," he said. "I shall have your house guarded night and day by twenty men, until the time comes for you to fulfil your promise, or until you change your mind, and acknowledge you were not in earnest. It would, perhaps, be wiser for you to leave the city at once; believe me, it is not safe to put a whole town in commotion. I know the Florentines, and I believe them to be capable of falling upon you in fury, perhaps of hanging you, when they find they have been mocked at and tricked. The least serious mishap that could befall you would be a sojourn of several months in prison while you waited for the public indignation to subside."

"I should deserve even more severe treatment if I failed to carry out my programme," said the doctor.

The doctor's interview with the magistrate was soon known all over Florence, and the news of it served to increase the popular interest and confidence in the stranger.

A week before the first of May, a man about forty years old, and dressed completely in black, entered the doctor's study. He was the Senator Arozzo, celebrated for the violent grief he had displayed on the death of his wife six months before.

"Signor Attrapeccini," said he, briskly, "I do not wish to waste words. Although what you promise is generally considered impossible, I admit that it may be possible, and I have come here to beg you to leave my wife at rest in the cemetery."

"What!" exclaimed the man of science, with a laugh, and the widower repeated his own words earnestly.

"I beg of you," he cried; "I am about to marry again—the banns will be published next month. You would not like to put a man in such a predicament, would you?"

As he spoke he placed a purse full of gold on the table.

"Set your mind at rest," said the doctor, "and continue the preparation for your wedding."

The next day he received a visit from Philippini, the most famous physician of Florence, and, indeed, of all Tuscany; out of every hundred Florentines at least eighty were at one time or another in his care.

"Learned and honoured brother," said he to Attrapeccini, "I trust that you will not do me the injury of bringing back to the light of day any of the unfortunate people who have chanced to pass away while in my hands."

"Certainly not," replied the other. "Just give me the names of the persons you mean."

"That would be a very difficult matter," said Philippini. "Would it not be more simple for you to exclude from your ceremony all my former patients?" and with these words he laid on the table a heap of gold coins.

"It shall certainly be as you wish, my dear brother," said the foreign physician.

The door had hardly closed upon Philippini when it was opened again to admit two brothers named Gavazza. The Duke Pierre Gavazza and his brother, the Marquess Paul, had risen, partly by their own merits, and partly by good luck, to the first rank in the Italian nobility; but their journey had been long and difficult, as their father had been a miller. It was the miller whom they did not wish to see restored to life.

Dr. Attrapeccini was shocked, and exclaimed angrily that he could not believe it possible that two persons could be so unnatural as to oppose the resuscitation of their own father. It was nothing less than parricide, and he would not connive at such baseness! He had not any intention of reviving the miller, but now he would take good care to do so; and, unless he changed his mind, the old Gavazza would be the first person resuscitated in the cemetery.

The dismay of the duke and the marquess may be imagined. They offered money, but though they had brought a large sum with them it was not sufficient to allay the scruples of Attrapeccini, and each of the brothers was obliged to sign a note.

The eve of the first of May arrived, and the guards round his house were doubled, and received the strictest orders, for the chief magistrate knew that the people would blame him if the invoker of the dead were allowed to escape. It was estimated that 50,000 persons were assembled in the cemetery or its vicinity on the first of May, at six in the morning, and as the doctor did not appear at the first stroke of the hour as he had promised, 50,000 voices cried out, "Attrapeccini! Attrapeccini!" At the same time the chief magistrate presented himself at the stranger's house, and found the interior of it just as empty as the exterior was well guarded.

The restorer of the dead had departed by way of the cellar, where there was an opening into the next house, and the chronicle reports that he took with him a sum equivalent to his 50,000 florins, which had been paid to him on consideration of not performing a miracle and of leaving the dead in their graves.

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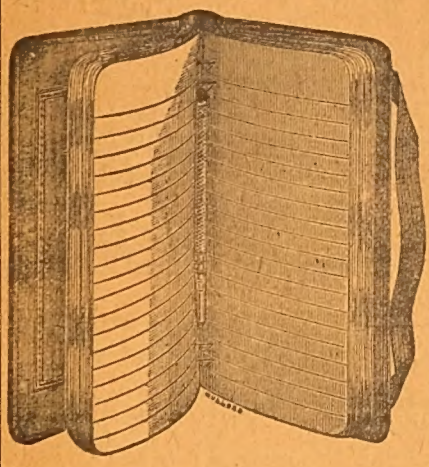

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OUR SOLID ENGLISH HOUSES.

NEARLY all the houses in England are of brick or stone. All the better for England, too, say I. We don't have so many fires. At the time of the great fire, when London was burned from London Bridge away over to Smithfield, it was a wooden town. It won't happen again—nor anything like it. The reason is too plain to need pointing out.

Now, why can't we learn to protect ourselves against diseases—which are fires in the body—in the same common-sense fashion? Then we might walk among fevers and epidemics like the three Hebrew children in the fiery furnace. "Not possible," say you. Yes, it is; only we won't take the trouble.

I introduce you to a lady who says that in May, 1894, she took such a terrible cold that she went near to dying of it. My point is, that what a wooden house is to a spark of fire, her body was to the influence we commonly call a "cold," but which should be called a "heat." Let us read what she says:—

"In the spring of 1888 I fell into a low, weak state. I was always tired, heavy, and sleepy, and much troubled with mazy bouts. I had no appetite, and great pain and tightness at the chest after meals. I often belched up a sour fluid; indeed, all my food seemed to turn into acid. Cold, clammy sweats used to break out over me, leaving me quite exhausted. Finally I got so weak I could barely walk about, and often, when outdoors, would swoon and fall down in the street.

"I consulted different physicians and took many medicines, but in spite of it all I was no better. This, in general terms, was my condition for six years. In May, 1894, I took a violent cold which pulled me down. My face swelled and my throat almost closed up. At times I was driven nearly mad with an excruciating pain in my head. There was an awful taste in my mouth, particularly in the morning. It was sickening, and made it impossible for me to even *taste* food, much less to enjoy it.

"From this time on I grew so much worse that I am not able to picture my sufferings in words. For months together I took no solid food at all; I lived on milk, sago, and other liquids. By now I was so weak I had to be lifted in and out of bed, and so wasted that little was left of me besides skin and bones. I was so nervous and excitable that a mere knocking at the door would make me tremble all over and set my heart beating like a drum. Usually I lay all day long on the couch, too weak to stir. When I attempted to walk alone I fell down.

"Both my husband and my friends gave up all hopes of my recovery. The doctor said I might get better, but he did not think I would. Thus, hopeless and helpless, I sank lower and lower.

"In November, 1894, a gentleman told my husband about Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup, and how it had benefited him when he was ill with an ailment like mine. That it would do me any good (so far gone was I) appeared to be too much to expect; but we got a bottle from Mr. West Lang's drug stores, Teviot Dale, and after I had taken it a short time I began to improve. My appetite revived, and I could eat without vomiting or feeling any of my former pain and distress. As I got stronger, the bad symptoms that had made me miserable so long, passed away, and I gained flesh and began to take an interest in life once more. I need only add that I continued with Seigel's Syrup until I was a new woman. I can now do my work easily and eat anything. This remedy saved my life, and I am willing all the world should know it. (Signed) (Mrs.) Sarah Ann Gould, No. 1, Froggart's Yard, Brady Street, Portwood, Stockport, February 15th, 1895."

This lady's bitter experience will appeal to the hearts of all who read it. But the point to bear in mind is this: When she took the bad cold in May, 1894, *she had already been suffering six years with chronic inflammatory dyspepsia*, which had thrown her whole system out of order, filled her blood with poisons from the diseased stomach, and rendered her an easy victim to any chill or exposure. The cold was only an *incident* of her trouble; it was like the fire which catches and consumes inflammable material. Keep your *digestion* right and your blood pure with Mother Seigel's Syrup, and you won't take cold. Please consider this fact carefully and act on it. Fasten your doors and windows and you keep out thieves.

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